

## Pythium Blight

Pythium blight appears as small reddish-brown patches on your lawn, and may spread very quickly in hot, humid weather and along drainage routes. Grass areas that are poorly drained or in high traffic areas are particularly susceptible to this disease. Keep your soil aerated, water the lawn early in the day, re-seed or re-sod any bare or thin patches, and use resistant grass varieties.

Fusarium blight, dollar spot, and brown patch are other diseases that affect the health of your lawn. As with all lawn diseases, these can be difficult to identify, so call your local lawn care company for help if you're not sure before treating for a specific problem.

## Animals

### Moles and Voles

Moles are small grey animals that tunnel just under the surface of your grass, cutting through the root layer and leaving roots exposed to dry out and die. While generally beneficial to lawns because they eat many insects and larvae, their tunnels damage the appearance and physical stability of your lawn. They prefer lawns infested with thick rooted plants, such as dandelions, thistle and clover.

Voles, or field mice, will actually feed on your plant roots, and gain access to them frequently by the mole tunnels discussed above.

See the PMRA pest note *Effective Control of Moles and Voles (Field Mice)* for further information about managing these pests.

### Racoons and Skunks

Racoons and skunks are generally digging up your lawn for white grubs and other insects, so once you've eliminated those pest problems you should not see them bothering your grass much.



## Remember



### Before Purchasing a Pesticide Product

- Identify the pest correctly.
- Use physical control methods and alternatives to pesticides.
- Read the label directions and safety precautions before buying the product. The label must include the name of the pest to be controlled and the treatment location (e.g., indoor, outdoor, garden uses, pet treatment).
- Purchase only the quantity of product needed for the treatment.
- Alternatively, you may choose to hire a licensed pest control operator.

### When Using a Pesticide

- Carefully read all label instructions and precautions before using pesticides.
- Do not drink, eat or smoke while applying pesticides.
- Persons and pets should vacate the area during treatment. Cover or remove aquaria.
- If kitchen area is to be treated, cover or remove food, dishes and utensils.

### After Handling a Pesticide

- Always wash your hands thoroughly after handling any pesticide product.
- Do not permit persons or pets to contact treated surfaces until residue has dried completely.
- Provide adequate ventilation of treated areas after use.
- Wipe clean all surfaces that come in direct contact with food, such as counters, tables and stovetops, including indoor and outdoor surfaces.
- Always store pesticides out of reach of children and pets and away from food and beverages.

### In Case of Accidental Poisoning

- Call a poison control centre immediately and seek medical attention.
- Take the pesticide container or label with you to the emergency facility or physician.
- Follow first aid statements on the label.
- In case of accidental poisoning of pets seek veterinary attention immediately.



### When Disposing of Pesticides

Do not reuse empty pesticide containers. Wrap and dispose of in household garbage.

Unused or partially used pesticide products should be disposed of at provincially or municipally designated household hazardous waste disposal sites.

### Use Common Sense

- These are general recommendations.
- Consult the label for specific instructions.
- When in doubt, contact a professional.



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Ottawa ON K1A 0K9

Pest Management Information Service

Telephone: 1-800-267-6315

From outside Canada: (613) 736-3799\*

\*Long distance charges apply.

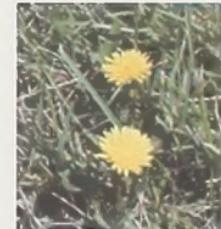
Fax: (613) 736-3798

Internet: [www.healthylawns.net](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/pmra-arsl/www/healthylawns.net)

Canada

Common Lawn Problems

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Some photographs courtesy of the Kansas Dept. of Agriculture, Plant Protection and Weed Control Program.

See the other two publications in the Pest Management Regulatory Agency's (PMRA) lawn care series, *Establishing a Lawn and Lawn Maintenance*, for a general discussion on lawn health and the prevention and control of pest problems.

Generally, lawn problems fall into one of four categories: (1) weeds or other plants competing with the grass for resources, (2) insects feeding on the grass, (3) diseases of the plants or soil, and (4) animals digging up your lawn to build homes or feed on insects under the grass. Most of these are usually present in your lawn, but can easily become pests if conditions change to favour their increase. Your lawn may have other problems as well, such as dead or brown patches. In most cases, these can be resolved easily using cultural methods, as discussed in *Lawn Maintenance*.

There are several pest notes available from the PMRA that deal directly with specific pests of your lawn, for example, ants, chinch bugs, moles and voles, and white grubs. Contact the Information Service at 1-800-267-6315 or download the notes from the web site at [www.hc-sc.gc.ca/pmra-arl](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/pmra-arl).

## Pest Management

Integrated pest management or IPM is a process for planning and managing sites to prevent pest problems and for making decisions about when and how to intervene when pest problems occur. In an IPM program, pest managers use regular inspections, called monitoring, to collect the

information needed to decide whether or not action must be taken. A key idea in IPM is that it is necessary to take action against pests only when their numbers warrant it, not as a routine measure. In most cases it is only necessary to suppress pest populations to non-damaging levels, not to eliminate them. If treatment is warranted, pest managers choose the most appropriate combination of control measures for the site. You can use these principles in controlling pests around your yard and home.

Not all insects are pests. Some are beneficial and are natural predators or parasites to the pest. Learn to identify which are beneficial and which can cause damage. Your local garden centre may be able to help you and there are many good sources of information on the web or in reference books.

Chemical pesticides are available for controlling pest populations and include herbicides for plants, insecticides for insects, and fungicides for various diseases. They have specific use instructions for certain species and conditions, so check the labels if you're purchasing any products or contact your local lawn care company. Non-chemical alternatives are available for most lawn pests and cultural practices help to eliminate most problems. You can also use a pesticide in a limited area, for example, spot-spraying an infested patch instead of treating the entire lawn.



## Weeds

Weeds are any plants growing where you don't want them. Besides being possibly unsightly and affecting the quality and quantity of your lawn or garden plants, they also compete with your lawn or garden plants for resources such as water, light, nutrients, and space. Common weeds in Canada include dandelions, plantains, chickweed, smooth crabgrass, creeping Charlie, ground ivy, burdock, hawkweed, thistles, lamb's quarter, heal-all, creeping speedwell, creeping buttercup, creeping knotweed, bindweed, and knapweed.

Removing weeds by hand (or a combination of garden tools) is the surest way to control them without using chemical herbicides. This can be important if you have sensitive plants or a vegetable garden.



Weeds can be most invasive in newly-seeded lawns, where the grass has not yet established itself vigorously. Wait until your new grass has been mowed at least a couple of times if you decide to treat it with a herbicide. Herbicides applied incorrectly can kill the plants you're trying to keep. Fortunately, most herbicides for domestic use target broadleaved weeds, so grass is not affected by them. Ask at your local home and garden store about new products that are more environmentally friendly.

The best way to avoid weeds is to maintain your lawn's health through using the right grasses for your yard, raising the mowing height to 8 cm (3 inches), watering and fertilizing as needed, and overseeding. Also, ensure that your lawn's moisture levels are adequate when treating it to avoid any unnecessary stress on it.

One no-cost, no effort alternative to weed control is that of developing a certain level of tolerance for some weeds in your yard.

## Insects

### Ants

Ants are generally beneficial insects, getting most of their food from scavenging other insects and decaying material. The most common problem with ants is if they make unwanted unsightly mounds (ant hills) in an obvious area in your lawn. You can force them to move out by leveling the mounds and turning on the hose to allow water to slowly trickle into the centre of the flattened mound. Continue this until the area is thoroughly wet.



See the PMRA pest note *Effective Control of Ants* for more information about controlling these pests.

### Chinch Bugs

Chinch bugs are small insects that suck the sap from your grass, leaving yellow circular patches that become brown and larger throughout the summer. They like thatch and dry conditions, so keep your grass tall and well watered.

See the PMRA pest note *Effective Control of Chinch Bugs* for more information about controlling these pests.

### Webworms

Sod webworms are the larval stage of a moth. They are brown, green, or grey with darker heads and they feed on your grass at the base of the stem. One sign that you may have this pest is yellow patches on your lawn that get larger throughout the summer. Another sign you may notice is birds feeding on your lawn. Sod webworms live in tunnels in the soil during the day, but you can see them at night if you go out with a flashlight. They like thatch, so remove excess thatch, aerate the soil, and seed any bare or thin grass areas.

### White Grubs

White grubs are the larval stage of several beetles, in Canada most commonly the June bug or beetle. They are whitish with brown heads and are usually C-shaped. They

feed on the roots of many plants, but prefer the fibrous roots of grass. If your lawn has irregular brown patches, try lifting a section. If it can be lifted in one piece, you will probably see grubs underneath.



## Diseases

### Fairy Ring

Fairy rings are circular or semicircular patches of dead grass with an inner green ring. These usually appear in lawns 5-15 years old and can be caused by a number of different fungi. The fungus feeds on the thatch and the ring grows outward. The fungus is not toxic to the grass, but it prevents water from penetrating into the grass root area, causing the grass to die and allowing that area to be infested with weeds. Repeated spiking with a garden fork (just outside the dead ring), soaking with soapy water and frequent watering to increase moisture can eliminate the ring. Reseed or resod the dead areas.



### Mushrooms

Mushrooms are indicators that something is decaying in your lawn, such as an old tree. They will usually disappear if you pick them or break them apart.

### Powdery Mildew

Mildew forms in cooler, more shaded areas and looks like grey powder on the lawn. You can over-seed with any shade-tolerant grass, such as creeping red fescue, or plant shade-loving ground covers, such as periwinkle, lily of the valley, hostas, or creeping juniper.